

1 Claims 7 and 8 have been amended to address an antecedent basis problem in regard to the  
2 term "the e-commerce agency." Also, Claim 8 has been amended to more clearly recite that the data  
3 are related to the purchase. Such data may include the credit card or financial account information for  
4 each user purchasing a softgood, a user ID, the softgood ID, and the softgood registration value or ID  
5 for softgoods purchased by each user, as is disclosed on page 13 of applicants' specification.

6 Claim 35 has been amended to eliminate the use of the term "or," although applicants do not  
7 believe the Examiner's objection to the use of "or" in this claim is justified, since the claim recites  
8 two definite alternatives, which is acceptable under MCEP § 2173.05(h)(II). There is no requirement  
9 that the alternatives be "equivalent," as indicated by the Examiner.

10 Accordingly, the rejection of Claims 7, 8, and 35 under 35 U.S.C. § 112 as being indefinite  
11 should be withdrawn.

12 Claims Rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102

13 Claims 20, 24, and 31 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by  
14 Ronning (U.S. Patent No. 5,883,955). The Examiner asserts that Ronning discloses a method for  
15 controlling play of a softgood on a computer using a player program that is also employed to  
16 purchase the softgood through a network transaction, including the step of enabling a user to preview  
17 the softgood on the computer within the player program. Applicants respectfully disagree for the  
18 following reasons.

19 Ronning describes a computer-based on-line system for demonstrating software programs to a  
20 potential purchaser. The system includes a distribution software program for managing the sampling  
21 of additional software programs (column 4, lines 48-49, and FIGURE 3). A user employs the  
22 distribution software program to select a software program to review. The user may then use the  
23 distribution software program to purchase a sampled software program. Ronning specifically  
24 suggests that the term "software program" is to be considered to encompass artistic works.

25 While noting that his invention can be applied to the purchase of image or audio files,  
26 Ronning provides no disclosure about the program that is to be used to view or listen to the image or  
27 audio files when previewing them. Ronning describes two embodiments, including a first  
28 embodiment in which a distribution software program is used to browse through available software,  
29 to select a software title to preview, and to purchase the title after the preview. A second  
30 embodiment is self launching, i.e., in which the distribution software program is invisible to the user  
31 (see column 5, lines 39-52 of the reference). Ronning explicitly states that in regard to the self  
32 launching embodiment, the user simply downloads the title to be previewed or purchased.  
33 Presumably, the download is done using a Web Browser while connected to the Internet.

34 Claim 20 recites "controlling play of a softgood on a computer using a player program,"  
35 "enabling a user to preview the softgood on the computer within the player program;" and "enabling

1 the user to purchase the softgood through a transaction conducted from within the player program.”  
2 Note that applicant’s method requires the use of a player program to play the softgood, to preview the  
3 softgood, and to purchase the softgood. Ronning does not use a player program for equivalent tasks.

4 In the first embodiment of Ronning, the distribution software program is used to browse through  
5 available software, to select a software title to preview, and to purchase the title after the preview. If the  
6 software title to be purchased is an application, then clearly the application is not previewed through the  
7 distribution software program. A preview copy (i.e. a locked or virtual copy) of the software application  
8 is downloaded and previewed in accord with Ronning, but the reference does not disclose that the  
9 preview occurs within the distribution software program. In fact, having the downloaded software  
10 *application* run within the distribution software program is not logical, unless the distribution software  
11 program is an operating system, or spawns a shell of the operating system, or if the downloaded  
12 application is an applet or plug-in specifically designed to add additional functionality to the distribution  
13 software program. However, Ronning does not describe the software application to be downloaded and  
14 previewed in such terms. Indeed, the language employed by Ronning (and the examples of titles in  
15 FIGURE 3) indicate the software applications are stand alone programs that do not run within the  
16 distribution software program. If the software title selected is an image or an audio file, presumably a  
17 separate player program needs to be launched to support play of the selected title, or the distribution  
18 software program must include a “player” functionality. Yet, this point is simply conjecture, since there  
19 is no disclosure in Ronning that suggests that the distribution software program itself has any player  
20 functionality. A rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102 requires that each element of the recited invention must  
21 be explicitly disclosed in the cited art. Even though Ronning discloses a program that can be used to  
22 preview image and audio files, the Examiner cannot impute facts not in evidence or known to a person of  
23 ordinary skill to support a rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102. Since Ronning fails to disclose a distribution  
24 software program that has player functionality, this reference does not anticipate or render the present  
25 claimed invention obvious.

26 With respect to the self launching embodiment of Ronning, clearly a software application that  
27 self launches is not previewed within any other program. Further, there is no reason to conclude that  
28 a software application that self launches is purchased within a player program that is part of the  
29 distributed software application of Ronning. While selecting an image or audio file from within a  
30 Web Browser might launch a player program to play the selected file, there is still no basis to  
31 conclude that *purchasing* such an image or audio file (or a softgood) from within a player program  
32 itself is known in the art. For example, player programs, such as Microsoft Corporation’s  
33 WINDOWS MEDIA PLAYER, or Real Network’s REAL PLAYER programs for playing MPG3  
34 audio files, or for viewing video clips, do not include purchasing functions that enable the work to be  
35 purchased from within the player program.

1 Thus, none of the embodiments disclosed by Ronning (using a distribution software program  
2 to select a software application to preview, using a distribution software program to select a softgood  
3 to preview, self launching a software application to preview, self launching a softgood to preview) is  
4 equivalent to "*controlling play of a softgood on a computer using a player program,*" "*enabling a*  
5 *user to preview the softgood on the computer within the player program,*" and "*enabling the user to*  
6 *purchase the softgood through a transaction conducted from within the player program.*" Further,  
7 there is no basis to conclude that given Ronning's disclosure, it would have been obvious to modify  
8 Ronning's method to achieve applicants' invention as recited in Claim 20.

9 Because dependent claims are patentable for at least the same reasons as the claims from  
10 which they depend, Claims 24 and 31 are patentable for at least the same reason as Claim 20.  
11 Accordingly, the rejection of Claims 20, 24 and 31 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by  
12 Ronning should be withdrawn.

13 Rejection of Claims 1-7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103

14 The Examiner has rejected Claims 1-5 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable  
15 over Molnar (U.S. Patent No. 5,166,886) in view of Stefik (U.S. Patent No. 5,629,980). The  
16 Examiner asserts that while none of the cited references discloses an identical invention, each  
17 reference discloses portions of the claimed invention, and when combined, the prior art references  
18 disclose all of the recited elements. With respect to Molnar, the Examiner asserts that Molnar  
19 discloses unique identifiers, distributing softgoods to prospective purchasers, and providing an  
20 agency. The Examiner further asserts that Stefik discloses the element missing from Molnar, a  
21 unique identifier that specifically references the creator of the softgoods. Applicants respectfully  
22 disagree for the following reasons.

23 Claim 1 recites, "distributing the softgoods to prospective purchasers, such that the  
24 distribution is not limited to a distribution over private networks." Molnar distributes locked or  
25 virtual copies to prospective purchasers, and those locked or virtual copies do not have the same  
26 range of functionality as the actual purchased software does. The locked version of the software is  
27 not identical to the unlocked version. In applicants' invention as recited in Claim 1, a "preview"  
28 copy of the softgood is absolutely identical to a "purchased copy." Whether the softgood is played in  
29 a preview mode or a full use mode depends on the player that is used, and on whether evidence of a  
30 purchase can be determined from a registry entry or from data maintained by an agency, as is fully  
31 described in applicants' specification. With respect to Stefik, the distribution of the software is not to  
32 prospective purchases, but only to actual purchasers, and the software are distributed only over  
33 secure, private networks of secure repositories. The cited art appears to provide no basis for  
34 modifying either Stefik or Molnar to achieve applicants' distribution of softgoods that "is not limited  
35 to a distribution over private networks" and so that, as recited in Claim 1, "softgoods that were

1 distributed to the prospective purchasers and then purchased being unchanged as a result of a  
2 purchase transaction.”

3 Claim 1 also specifically recites, “providing an agency having a server that implements  
4 softgood purchase transactions and maintains a database in which data relating to the sale of  
5 softgoods are stored, unique identifiers of the softgoods being referenced in the database to track the  
6 softgood purchase transactions, such that for softgoods that are purchased, the database maintains  
7 data relating to purchasers of the softgoods for as long as the agency is managing purchases of the  
8 softgoods.” While Molnar arguably discloses an agency that enables a software program to be  
9 purchased, there is teaching or suggestion that Molnar’s agency includes a database that tracks  
10 softgood purchase transactions related to purchasers of the softgoods. A key feature of applicants’  
11 invention is that the database retains data that identifies every purchaser of each softgood managed by  
12 the agency. While some databases may regularly delete data after a defined period of time (e.g., after  
13 90 days) to reduce the memory resources required, in the present invention as claimed, the data are  
14 retained for as long as the agency is managing purchases of the softgood (so that the player program  
15 can query the database to determine if full mode play or preview play is appropriate for a specific  
16 user/player/softgood combination). Claim 1 has been amended to more clearly recite this aspect of  
17 applicants’ invention. With respect to Stefik, “rights” to a softgood (such rights having been  
18 purchased) are included *within* the softgood. Consequently, in Stefik, there is no disclosure or  
19 suggestion of a database containing or maintaining information related to purchases of softgoods.  
20 There appears to be no teaching or suggestion in the cited art of an agency that has a server  
21 maintaining a database in which data relating to actual purchasers of a softgood is maintained for as  
22 long as the agency is managing purchases of that softgood.

23 Thus, Claim 1 is patentably distinguishable over the cited art. There appears to be no basis in  
24 the cited art to modify Molnar and Stefik to achieve an equivalent applicants’ claimed invention. The  
25 Examiner has also rejected Claim 6 as being obvious in view of additional art. However, because  
26 dependent claims are patentable for at least the same reasons as the claims from which they depend,  
27 Claims 2-7 are patentable for at least the same reason as Claim 1. Accordingly, the rejection of  
28 Claims 1-7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious should be withdrawn.

29 Rejection of Claims 8-19 under 35 U.S.C. § 103

30 The Examiner has rejected Claims 8-19 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over  
31 Ronning in view of Stefik, and further in view of Bernard (U.S. Patent No. 5,918,213). The  
32 Examiner asserts that while none of the cited references discloses an identical invention, each  
33 reference discloses portions of the claimed invention, and when combined, the prior art references  
34 disclose all of the recited elements. With respect to Ronning, the Examiner asserts that Ronning  
35 discloses all elements of the claimed invention except for a unique identifier assigned to the softgood,

1 either the identification of the creator or the program used to generate the softgood, a price associated  
2 with the softgood prior to distribution, and prohibiting a purchaser from modifying the softgood. The  
3 Examiner asserts that Stefik and Bernard disclose the remaining elements. Applicants respectfully  
4 disagree for the following reasons.

5 Claim 8 specifically recites "enabling purchase of the softgood from within the player  
6 program." While Ronning indicates that the softgoods can be selected from a software distribution  
7 program and previewed (presumably in a separate player program as dictated by the type of  
8 softgood), Ronning does not disclose that the softgood being previewed can be purchased *within the*  
9 *player program*. The disclosure in Ronning of a software distribution program that enables a user to  
10 select a title, and purchase a title does not suggest that the software distribution program also has the  
11 capability of playing the softgood. Softgoods can include audio files, image files, and video clips that  
12 require a suitable player. There is simply no basis to conclude that the software distribution program  
13 disclosed by Ronning has any functionality beyond that specifically disclosed (i.e., selecting and  
14 purchasing software). Bernard does not teach or suggest *purchase of a softgood from within a player*  
15 *program*, because Bernard discloses an automated telephone purchasing system, not a system in  
16 which a purchases is accessing the system via a computer. Note that Stefik doesn't control purchases  
17 through a player program either.

18 Claim 8 also specifically recites "registering the softgood on the computer employed for the  
19 network transaction." Ronning discloses software being in either a locked state or an unlocked state.  
20 Ronning does not disclose that when one receives an unlocked softgood that such a softgood is  
21 registered on the *user's* computer (i.e., the computer on which the player program used to preview  
22 and purchase the softgood executes). Once unlocked, the softgood distributed by Ronning can be  
23 freely copied in its unlocked state. In applicants' invention, the softgood does not transition between  
24 a locked state and an unlocked state. In applicants' claimed invention, the softgood downloaded for  
25 preview is identical to the softgood that has been purchased. Instead of unlocking a softgood, as does  
26 Ronning, the present invention employs a specific player that is either authorized or not authorized to  
27 play the softgood without restriction. In regard to the very different kind of softgood that is described  
28 by Stefik, the softgood itself defines usage rights; such usage rights are not separately registered on a  
29 user's computer, but instead are already part of the softgood according to Stefik. As noted above,  
30 Bernard does not deal with computer accessed softgoods.

31 The combination of art cited by the Examiner fails to achieve both *purchase of a softgood*  
32 *from within a player program*, and *registering the softgood on the computer employed for the*  
33 *network transaction*. There does not appear to be any suggestion for modifying the cited art to  
34 achieve those steps. Thus, Claim 8 is patentably distinguishable over the cited art. Because  
35 dependent claims are patentable for at least the same reasons as the claims from which they depend,

1 Claims 9-19 are patentable for at least the same reason as Claim 8. Accordingly, the rejection of  
2 Claims 8-19 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious in view of the cited art should be withdrawn.

3 Rejection of Claims 21-23, 25-29, and 30 under 35 U.S.C. § 103

4 The Examiner has rejected Claims 21-23, 25-29, and 30 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being  
5 unpatentable over various art. Applicants respectfully disagree for the following reasons.

6 As discussed above, Claim 20 is patentable over Ronning, because none of the embodiments  
7 disclosed by Ronning (using a distribution software program to select a software application to  
8 preview, using a distribution software program to select a softgood to preview, self launching a  
9 software application to preview, self launching a softgood to preview) are equivalent to applicants'  
10 claims that recite: "controlling play of a softgood on a computer using a player program;" "enabling  
11 a user to preview the softgood on the computer within the player program;" and, "enabling the user to  
12 purchase the softgood through a transaction conducted within the player program." Because  
13 dependent claims are patentable for at least the same reasons as the claims from which they depend,  
14 Claims 21-23, 25-29, and 30 are patentable for at least the same reason as Claim 20. Accordingly,  
15 the rejection of Claims 21-23, 25-29, and 30 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over the cited art  
16 should be withdrawn.

17 Rejection of Claims 32-34 under 35 U.S.C. § 103

18 The Examiner has rejected Claims 32-33 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over  
19 Ronning, Bernard, Stefik, and rejects Claim 34 over those references, further in view of Richardson.  
20 Applicants respectfully disagree for the following reasons.

21 Claim 32 recites a player program whose machine instructions, in part, *enable the user to*  
22 *purchase the softgood.* As noted above, there appears to be no basis for combining or modifying the  
23 cited art to achieve an invention that *enables the user to purchase the softgood within the player*  
24 *program.* Because dependent claims are patentable for at least the same reasons as the claims from  
25 which they depend, Claims 33-34 are patentable for at least the same reason as Claim 32.  
26 Accordingly, the rejection of Claims 32-34 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over the cited art  
27 should be withdrawn.

28 Rejection of Claims 35-41 under 35 U.S.C. § 103

29 The Examiner has rejected Claims 35-41 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over  
30 the same art as cited against Claim 34. Applicants respectfully disagree for the following reasons.

31 Claim 35 recites, "creator computers that execute at least one software program used by the  
32 creators of the softgoods to produce the softgoods and to assign the unique identifier to the  
33 softgoods," making softgoods available across "a publicly accessible network," and "transmitting a  
34 registration value over the publicly accessible network to a computer of the user to register the  
35 softgood on the computer of the user." Ronning discloses making softgoods available across a publicly

1 accessible network, but not "creator computers that assign the unique identifier to the softgoods" or  
2 transmitting "a registration value over the publicly accessible network to a computer of the user to  
3 register the softgood on the computer of the user." Stefik discloses "creator computers that execute  
4 one or more software programs used by the creators of the softgoods to produce the softgoods and to  
5 assign the unique identifier to the softgoods," but not making softgoods available across a publicly  
6 accessible network or transmitting a registration value over the publicly accessible network to a  
7 computer of the user to register the softgood on the computer of the user.

8 However, it does not appear that any of the cited art discloses or suggests transmitting "a  
9 registration value over the publicly accessible network to a computer of the user to register the  
10 softgood on the computer of the user," and there does not there appear to be any suggestion for  
11 modifying the cited art to achieve this aspect of the claimed invention. Furthermore, there does not  
12 appear to be any reason why one of ordinary skill in the art would be led to combine or modify the  
13 disparate teachings of these references to achieve the invention recited by applicants' claims.  
14 Accordingly, Claim 35 is clearly patentable in view of these references.

15 Because dependent claims are patentable for at least the same reasons as the claims from  
16 which they depend, Claims 36-41 are patentable for at least the same reason as Claim 35.  
17 Accordingly, the rejection of Claims 35-41 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as obvious over the art cited  
18 should be withdrawn.

#### 19 Patentability of Newly Added Claims

20 New independent Claims 42-44 have been added by the present amendment, each recite a  
21 player program that carries out the following steps: *checking a registry associated with a computing*  
22 *system on which the player program executes to determine if a unique identifier for a softgood is in*  
23 *the registry, and if the unique identifier is in the registry, playing the softgood and providing access*  
24 *to its full range of benefits; if the unique identifier is not in the registry, checking with an agency to*  
25 *determine if the unique identifier for the formatted softgood can be tracked to a purchase made by a*  
26 *purchaser who is also an authorized user of the system, and if so, playing the formatted softgood,*  
27 *providing access to its full range of benefits; and if the unique identifier is not in the registry and*  
28 *cannot be tracked to an authorized user by the agency, then performing at least one of (1) playing the*  
29 *softgood in a preview mode, and (2) prompting the user to purchase the softgood using the agency.*  
30 Claim 42 positively recites the step of distributing such a player program, Claim 43 is directed to  
31 such a player program stored in a memory media, and Claim 44 is directed to a computing system in  
32 which such a player program is executed.

33 While the cited art discloses that softgoods requiring player programs can be distributed in some  
34 protected form, none of the cited art does so using a player program equivalent to that defined by  
35 applicants in Claims 42-44. Stefik describes a closed system, in which the softgoods themselves define

1 authorized use. For example, as disclosed by Stefik, only a player program that is linked to a closed  
2 system can access a softgood. Then, the softgood itself determine the manner in which the player  
3 program can manipulate the softgood. The player program does not consult a registry or an agency to  
4 determine who has purchased and is thus authorized to play a softgood (i.e. in full mode rather than in  
5 just demo mode), in Stefik's system the "rights" are incorporated into the softgood itself.

6 Molnar describes a system in which each softgood is either "locked" or "unlocked." The  
7 player program will play the "locked" version of a softgood in a preview mode, and the "unlocked"  
8 version in a full use mode (i.e. play with the full range of benefits of the softgood). Again, the locked  
9 or unlocked state of the softgood in Molnar is defined by the softgood itself, not according to a  
10 registry entry or determined by checking data maintained by an agency, as recited in applicants'  
11 claims. According to Molnar, the softgood actually changes state, while the softgoods played by the  
12 player program of Claims 42-44 do not. Also, once softgoods protected by Molnar's disclosure are  
13 unlocked, they can be copied and played by unauthorized user and unauthorized players without  
14 restriction. As recited in Claims 42-44, each copy of the recited player program always checks either  
15 the registry of the computer that copy of the player program resides on, or the agency, to determine if  
16 the softgood can be played in a full mode or is limited to a preview mode. Freely distributing copies  
17 of softgoods does not circumvent the protection, because each player program will determine whether  
18 a softgood can be played in preview or full mode. Thus Claims 42-44 are distinguishable over the  
19 cited art.

20 In consideration of the preceding remarks, it will be apparent that all claims in this application  
21 recite patentable subject matter and that the case is in condition for allowance. The Examiner is  
22 therefore requested to pass this application to Issue without further delay. In the event that any  
23 questions remain unresolved, the Examiner is invited to telephone applicants' attorney at the number  
24 listed below.

25 Respectfully submitted,

26 

27 Ronald M. Anderson  
28 Registration No. 28,829  
29  
30  
31

32 I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the U.S. Postal Service in a sealed  
33 envelope as first class mail with postage thereon fully prepaid addressed to: Director of Patents and  
34 Trademarks, Arlington, VA 22202, on June 18, 2002.

35 Date: June 18, 2002





MARKED-UP VERSION OF THE AMENDMENTS

Amendment to the Claims

In the Claims:

Please amend Claims 1, 7, 8, and 35 as follows:

1. (Amended) A method for facilitating automated sale of softgoods, comprising the steps of:

(a) providing a program to a creator of the softgoods that automatically includes a unique identifier in each softgood before the softgood is distributed to prospective purchasers, said unique identifier specifically referencing the creator of the softgoods;

(b) distributing the softgoods to prospective purchasers, such that the distribution is not limited to a distribution over private networks; and

(c) providing an agency having a server that implements softgood purchase transactions and maintains a database in which data relating to the sale of softgoods are stored, unique identifiers of the softgoods being referenced in the database to track the softgood purchase transactions, such that for softgoods that are purchased, the database maintains data relating to purchasers of the softgoods for as long as the agency is managing purchases of the softgoods, softgoods that were distributed to the prospective purchasers and then purchased being unchanged as a result of a purchase transaction.

7. (Amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein the unique identifier for a softgood is communicated to the [e-commerce] agency and entered into the database when the softgood is first purchased.

8. (Amended) A method for facilitating purchase of a softgood that is freely distributed to prospective purchasers for preview within a player program and which includes a unique identifier that is assigned to the softgood before the softgood is distributed, comprising the steps of:

(a) enabling prospective purchasers to preview the softgood with the player program to a limited extent, prior to deciding to purchase the softgood;

(b) enabling purchase of the softgood from within the player program by connecting a computer on which the player program is executing with [the] an e-commerce agency to initiate a network transaction, purchase of the softgood causing [related] data related to the purchase to be recorded in the database of the e-commerce agency and causing a registration value that references the unique identifier to be transmitted to the computer on which the player program is executing; and

(c) using the player program, registering the softgood on the computer employed for the network transaction using the registration value provided by the e-commerce agency, registration of the softgood on the computer enabling the softgood to be played by the player program beyond the limited extent of the preview.

1           35. (Amended) A system for facilitating automated sale of softgoods from which a revenue  
2 stream is returned to each creator of the softgoods, each softgood including a unique identifier,  
3 comprising:

4           (a) creator computers that execute at least one [or more] software program[s] used  
5 by [the] creators of the softgoods to produce the softgoods and to assign the unique identifier to the  
6 softgoods produced thereby, said creator computers including network interfaces that couple the  
7 creator computers to a publicly accessible network, the creators of the softgoods entering into  
8 agreements with an e-commerce agency in which the e-commerce agency agrees to facilitate the  
9 automated sale of the softgoods and to return a portion of the revenue stream from the automated sale  
10 to the creators of the softgoods; and

11           (b) a server computer operated by the e-commerce agency, said server computer  
12 maintaining a database in which data relating to the softgoods are stored, said data including unique  
13 identifiers for the softgoods, said server computer also including a network interface coupling the server  
14 computer in communication with the publicly accessible network and receiving the unique identifier  
15 for each softgood [either] from one of:

16           (i) the creator computers before distribution of the softgood to prospective  
17 purchasers[, or from]; and

18           (ii) a user of the softgood at a sale of the softgood, a purchase of a softgood  
19 being initiated when a softgood is being used, said purchase by a user of the softgood causing the  
20 server computer to confirm approval of a credit transaction for the user by an on-line communication  
21 with a credit approval agency, and if the credit transaction is approved, to transmit a registration  
22 value over the publicly accessible network to a computer of the user to register the softgood on the  
23 computer of the user, to enter data related to the purchase within the database.

24 Please add new claims 42-44 as follows:

25           --42. A method for controlling the use of freely distributable softgoods, by requiring that a  
26 specific player program for the softgoods be used to enjoy the full range of benefits of the softgoods,  
27 comprising the steps of:

28           (a) providing a composer program that automatically:

29           (i) includes a unique identifier in each softgood; and

30           (ii) formats each softgood such that the specific player program is required  
31 to play the formatted softgood in more than a preview mode, said preview mode not providing access  
32 to the full range of benefits of the softgood;

33           (b) providing an agency having a server that implements softgood purchase  
34 transactions and maintains a database in which data relating to the sale of softgoods are stored, unique  
35 identifiers of the softgoods being referenced in the database to track the softgood purchase transactions;

1 (c) distributing the formatted softgoods to prospective purchasers, such  
2 distribution not being limited to distribution over a private network; and

3 (d) distributing the specific player program to prospective purchasers, such that  
4 each time the specific player program is used to play a formatted softgood, the specific player  
5 program automatically:

6 (i) checks a registry associated with a computing system on which the  
7 specific player program is resident, to determine if the unique identifier for the formatted softgood is  
8 in the registry, and if so, plays the formatted softgood so as to provide access to its full range of  
9 benefits; and

10 (ii) if the unique identifier is not in the registry, communicates with the  
11 agency to determine if the unique identifier for the formatted softgood is associated with a purchase  
12 of the softgood made by a purchaser who is an authorized user of the computing system on which the  
13 specific player program is resident, and if so, plays the formatted softgood with its full range of  
14 benefits; and

15 (iii) if the unique identifier is not in the registry and is not associated with  
16 an authorized user, enables playing the softgood in the preview mode, and prompts the user to  
17 purchase the softgood using the agency.

18 43. An article of manufacture adapted for use with a processor, comprising:

19 (a) a memory medium; and

20 (b) a plurality of machine instructions, which are stored on the memory medium,  
21 said plurality of machine instructions when executed by a processor, causing the processor to:

22 (i) check a registry associated with the processor to determine if a unique  
23 identifier for a softgood is included in the registry, and if the unique identifier is included in the  
24 registry, playing the softgood with its full range of benefits;

25 (ii) if the unique identifier is not in the registry, check with an agency to  
26 determine if the unique identifier for the softgood can be tracked to a purchase made by a purchaser  
27 who is also identifiable as an authorized user of a computing system associated with the processor,  
28 and if so, playing the softgood with its full range of benefits; and

29 (iii) if the unique identifier is not in the registry and cannot be tracked to an  
30 authorized user by the agency, then execute at least one of playing the softgood in a preview mode,  
31 and prompting the user to purchase the softgood using the agency.

32 44. A system for playing softgoods that include unique identifiers, comprising:

33 (a) a memory in which a plurality of machine instructions defining a software  
34 application are stored;

35 (b) a display; and

1 (c) a processor that is coupled to the display and to the memory to access the  
2 machine instructions, said processor executing said machine instructions and thereby implementing a  
3 plurality of functions, as follows:

4 (i) checking a registry associated with the processor to determine if a  
5 unique identifier for a softgood is in the registry, and if so, playing the softgood with access to a full  
6 range of its benefits;

7 (ii) if the unique identifier is not in the registry, checking with an agency to  
8 determine if the unique identifier for the softgood is associated with a purchase of the softgood made  
9 by a purchaser who is an authorized user of the system, and if so, playing the softgood with access to  
10 the full range of its benefits; and

11 (iii) if conditions set forth above in (c)(i) or (c)(ii) are not met, then  
12 performing at least one of:

- 13 (1) playing the softgood in a preview mode; and  
14 (2) prompting the user to purchase the softgood using the agency.--  
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